

## Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently amended) In a distributed computing environment, a method for managing an electronic record for compliance with a pre-determined retention policy of an organization, the method comprising ~~the steps of:~~

creating an electronic tag that uniquely identifies the electronic record, the electronic tag being associated with a minimum retention period for compliance with the pre-determined retention policy ~~having at least one field for characterizing the record;~~

storing the at least one electronic tag in a central repository;

sending the electronic record to a recipient; and

*E1* denying a request to delete the electronic record before expiration of the minimum retention period associated with the electronic tag

wherein:

~~at least one of the steps of creating and storing ensure maintenance of the characterized record for a minimum time period based on the pre-determined retention policy; and the recipient will be unable to delete the record from the central repository prior to the end of the minimum time period established by the predetermined retention policy.~~

2. (Currently amended) The method of claim ~~claim~~ 1, further comprising ~~the step of purging the electronic record comprising the steps of deleting the electronic record and selectively deleting the at least one electronic tag.~~

3. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, ~~wherein the storing step~~ further comprising ~~comprises the step of~~ storing the electronic record.

4. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, ~~wherein the sending step~~ further comprising ~~comprises the step of selectively~~ determining whether the request is consistent with the retention policy ~~recipient may purge the electronic record.~~

5. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the distributed computing environment comprises a ~~computers~~ having a registry and a user profile, wherein ~~the creating step~~ the electronic tag ~~comprises the steps of:~~

~~analyzing a network user's workstation specifications;~~

~~analyzing a network user's user profile;~~

~~generating a reference code;~~ and

wherein the electronic tag is generated at least in part as a function of at least one of the registry, the ~~from information analyzed in at least one of the network user's workstation, the network user's user profile, and the reference code.~~

6. (Currently amended) The method of claim 5 4, wherein generating the reference code ~~the creating step further~~ comprises ~~the steps of:~~

~~reading the stored electronic tags; and~~

~~generating a further electronic tag in response to accessing an electronic record.~~

7. (Currently amended) The method of claim 5, wherein the generating step further reference code comprises a classification code and an index code ~~the steps of reading the electronic record.~~

8. (Currently amended) The method of claim 7 5, wherein the classification reference code comprises a classification code and an index code is selected from a group comprising business email, personal email, intramail, bulletin board, minutemail, and purgemail.

9. (Currently amended) The method of claim 7 8, wherein the index classification code identifies the contents of the electronic record and the recipient of the electronic record is selected from a group comprising business email, personal email, intramail, bulletin board, minutemail, and purgemail.

10. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 8, wherein creating the electronic tag comprises:  
reading a stored electronic tag; and  
generating an electronic tag in response to accessing an ~~the index code identifies the contents of the electronic record and the recipient of the electronic record.~~

11. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic record comprises is an email message.

12. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~the sending the electronic record~~ step comprises ~~the steps of:~~  
reading the electronic tag; and

generating a new electronic tag at least in part as a function of based on the read  
electronic tag, a computer registry, a user profile ~~wherein the generating step comprises~~  
~~the steps of reading a network user's workstation specifications, reading a network user's~~  
~~user profile, and generating a reference code.~~

13. (Currently amended) In a distributed computing environment, an  
apparatus for managing an electronic record for compliance with a pre-determined  
retention policy ~~of an organization~~, the apparatus comprising:

a computer system comprising at least one processor and at least one memory, the  
computer system being adapted and arranged to for:

*3'* create ~~creating~~ an electronic tag that uniquely identifies the electronic record,  
the electronic tag being associated with a minimum retention period for compliance with  
the retention policy ~~having at least one field for characterizing the record;~~

storing the at least one electronic tag in a central repository;

sending the electronic record to a recipient; and

deny a request to delete the electronic record before expiration of the  
minimum retention period associated with the electronic tag

wherein:

~~at least one of the steps of creating and storing ensure maintenance of the~~  
~~characterized record for a minimum time period based on the pre-determined retention~~  
~~policy; and~~

~~the recipient will be unable to delete the record from the central repository prior to~~  
~~the end of the minimum time period established by the pre-determined retention policy.~~

14. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the computer system is further adapted and arranged for purging the electronic record by deleting ~~wherein the computer system deletes~~ the electronic record and selectively deleting ~~deletes~~ the at least one electronic tag.

15. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the computer system is further adapted and arranged for selectively determining whether the request is consistent with the retention policy ~~recipient may purge the electronic record.~~

16. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the distributed computing environment comprises a computers having a registry and a user profile, wherein the computer system is configured and arranged to ~~for~~:

- ~~analyzing a network user's workstation specifications;~~
- ~~analyzing a network user's user profile; and~~
- generate ~~generating~~ a reference code, wherein the electronic tag is generated at least in part as a function of ~~from information analyzed in~~ at least one of the registry ~~network user's workstation, the network user's user profile, and the reference code.~~

17. (Currently amended) In a distributed computing environment, an article of manufacture for managing an electronic record for compliance with a pre-determined retention policy ~~of an organization~~, the article of manufacture comprising a computer-

readable storage medium having a computer program embodied therein that causes the computer network to ~~perform the steps of:~~

~~create~~ creating an electronic tag that identifies the electronic record, the electronic tag being associated with a minimum retention period for compliance with the retention policy ~~having at least one field for characterizing the record;~~

~~store~~ storing the ~~at least one~~ electronic tag in a central repository;

sending the electronic record to a recipient; and

~~deny a request to delete the electronic record before expiration of the minimum retention period associated with the electronic tag~~

wherein:

~~at least one of the steps of creating and storing ensure maintenance of the characterized record for a minimum time period based on the pre-determined retention policy; and~~

~~the recipient will be unable to delete the record from the central repository prior to the end of the minimum time period established by the pre-determined retention policy.~~

18. (Currently amended) The article of claim 17, wherein the computer program further causes the computer network to purge ~~comprising the step of purging the electronic record by comprising the steps of deleting the electronic record and selectively deleting the at least one electronic tag.~~

19. (Currently amended) The article of claim 17, wherein the computer program further causes the computer network to store ~~storing step further comprises the step of storing the electronic record.~~

20. (Currently amended) The article of claim 17, wherein the computer program further causes the computer network to selectively determine ~~sending step further comprises the step of selectively determining whether the request is consistent with the retention policy recipient may purge the electronic record.~~

21. (Currently amended) The article of claim 17, wherein the distributed computing environment comprises a computers having a registry and a user profile, wherein the computer program further causes the computer network to ~~creating step comprises the steps of:~~

~~analyzing a network user's workstation specifications;~~

~~analyzing a network user's user profile; and~~

generate ~~generating a reference code, wherein the electronic tag is generated at least in part as a function of at least one of the registry from information analyzed in the network user's workstation, the network user's user profile, and the reference code.~~

22. (Currently amended) The article of claim 17, wherein the computer program further causes the computer network to ~~creating step further comprises the steps of:~~

read a ~~reading the stored electronic tags; and~~

generate generating a further electronic tag in response to accessing an electronic  
record.

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